

COLOR STUDIES
FOR
RAFFIA BASKETS



ROSE AND BUD

COLOR STUDIES

FOR

RAFFIA BASKETS

BY

GERTRUDE PORTER ASHLEY

DEERFIELD, MASS.

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1925

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DEDICATED

to the members of

THE SOCIETY OF DEERFIELD INDUSTRIES

with whom as a charter member the author
has worked for more than twenty-five years.



ROSE AND BUD ON NEUTRAL BACKGROUND



RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

FOR BEGINNERS

The average raffia basket is scarcely worth the trouble of making because of inferior workmanship, uninteresting colors and designs. It may, however, with a knowledge of the details which go to perfect the workmanship, the combining of soft colors which are permanent, into even simple designs, be an object of art with all the possibilities of line, color and design.

The novice in raffia basket making usually makes a row or more of some color near the top of the basket which, after a short space of natural color is repeated



PANSY

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

with a broader band of another color. This may all be very well until the worker has acquired a good technique, which is the foundation of all craft work. Few beginners have much idea about design or color, and the entire attention at first is centered on the technical difficulties. After a few lessons when the basket is approaching completion, the pupil is ready and anxious to work with colors, and has become sufficiently advanced to work out a simple pattern.

For the past three years this collection of designs and many others have been used in teaching raffia basketry, with much success and great interest on the part of the pupil, who feels that he has something definite to follow; for in working out this plan, the pupil learns to change from one color to another, and something of color and design. He also finds the result much



DEERFIELD VIOLETS

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

more pleasing than if he had made a few straight lines around the basket. Very likely he will soon find that he can make his own designs, which is far more to be desired, for who, being able to create, would wish to follow the ideas of another.

The stitches, tho not indicated in the following illustrations, are to be placed as inconspicuously as possible, usually at the beginning and end of each color. For example, in Ill. No. 1 where the lower row of design has a short space of green on a background of white or natural raffia, the stitch which joins the two rows should be taken with the white rather than with the green. This makes the outline clear-cut. The green color is then smoothly wound over the reed for the desired space and the stitch again taken with the white for the same reason. **KEEP THE OUTLINE CLEAR-CUT** is a good rule to establish,

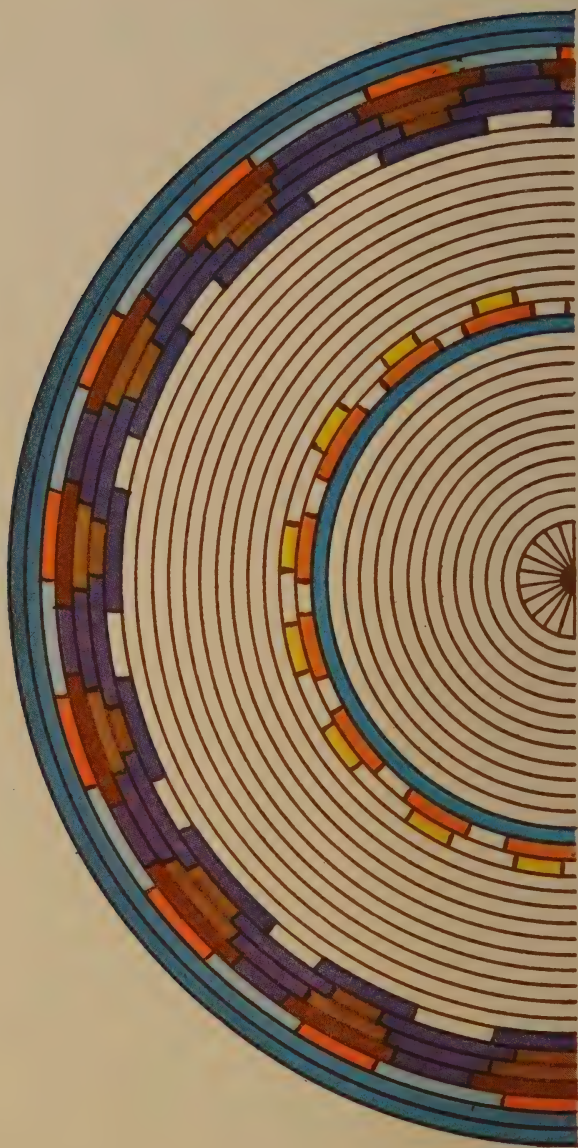


CONVENTIONAL BORDER (a)

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

tho there may be times when it is difficult to do so. Practically every stitch in the entire basket should be considered as part of a design, no stitch being taken hap-hazard. In other words—every stitch has a definite meaning for the intelligent worker. In considering designs one must always have in mind the thought that the stitch or group of stitches must be placed sufficiently close together to give the necessary support to the basket.

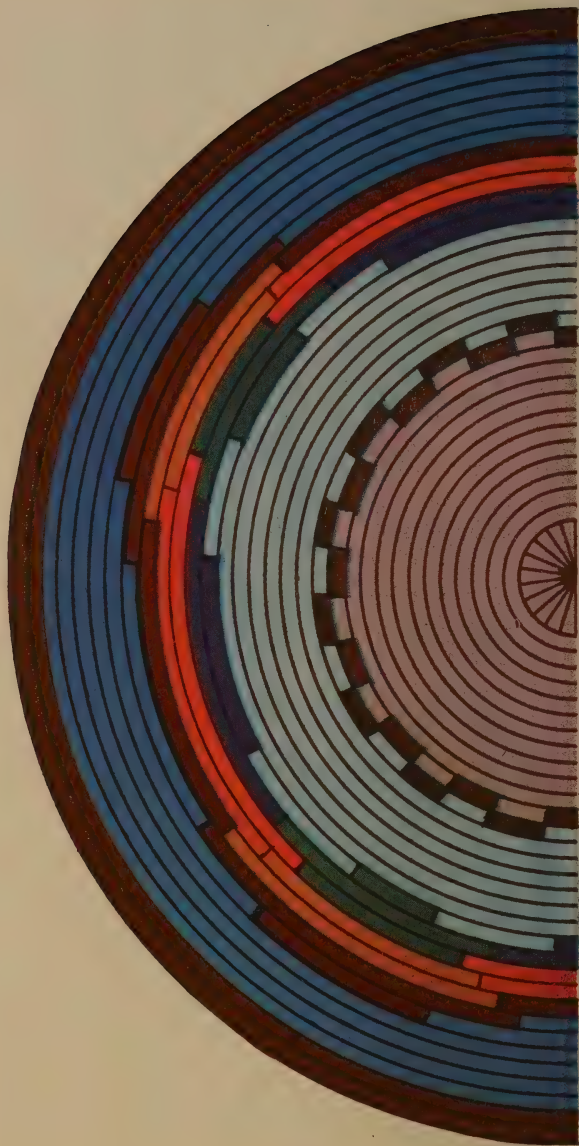
Many flowers are too complicated in form to lend themselves to designs for raffia baskets. Some, however are adapted both in form and color, and these may be reproduced with great satisfaction. The pansy with its many varieties of rich colors is one of these, and even a small design may be well arranged on a fairly large basket if placed at sufficiently close intervals. A small basket requires less shading



CONVENTIONAL BORDER (b)

than a large one, and should be simple in design. A design may be developed in a variety of colors on the same basket. For example, the rose design may be red, pink or yellow or even all three in a group or wreath. It may be large or small according to the size of the reed: — placed solitary, in group or continuous: — of one solid color or shaded: — with background of gray or some other neutral: — with or without cover. Always keep to the standard of simple lines, however varied the form may be, and bear in mind the use for which the basket was intended.

There may be handles on the sides or over the top, of which there are many varieties from which to choose. What an interesting experiment might be tried by making a collection of baskets with the pansy for motif, each differing from the other in form, size and color!



COLOR STUDY

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

Flowers which are too difficult in form are often very desirable for color combinations, beginning with a centre of white, yellow or orange, which is so often seen in the centre of a flower. If the basket is intended for use, too much decoration at this point is undesirable, as it is usually covered. Follow this by a wide neutral space which may be made very interesting with geometrical designs sufficiently close to be strong. Begin the border when half-way up the sides using soft and quiet tones at first, and in groups, rather than in straight rows around the basket. Make each row more interesting than the one preceding, by deepening the tones already introduced, and add others which gradually lead to the prevailing color in the flower which was suggested for a model.

The hollyhock has many varieties of color and almost any one of them would



AUTUMN LEAVES

result in a pleasing combination. There are autumn leaves in all shades of yellow, brown, green and red. There are colors in sunset skies with scarcely perceptible beginning or ending — just a passing from gray into yellow, orange or rose into deeper gray or blue. This is what we try to suggest in our basketry color studies making the colors intertwine and overlap. The result is usually very satisfying, and meanwhile the worker is unconsciously developing his sense of color harmony directly from nature instead of by a chart or just merely guessing at a combination which may or may not result happily.

The stitches best adapted to floral designs are the LAZY SQUAW and the WINDING stitch. For a conventional design almost any stitch may be used. The solid BLOCK stitch gives strength and character as a finish to the bottom of



WREATH OF ROSES

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

the basket, and it may be made of alternating colors, every other block of which is started on the row above. The single block is made by sewing or winding over two rows, which results in a wide row quite around the basket. For a finish, KNOT stitch best serves the purpose, often using a large reed, which adds strength, especially if handles are made.

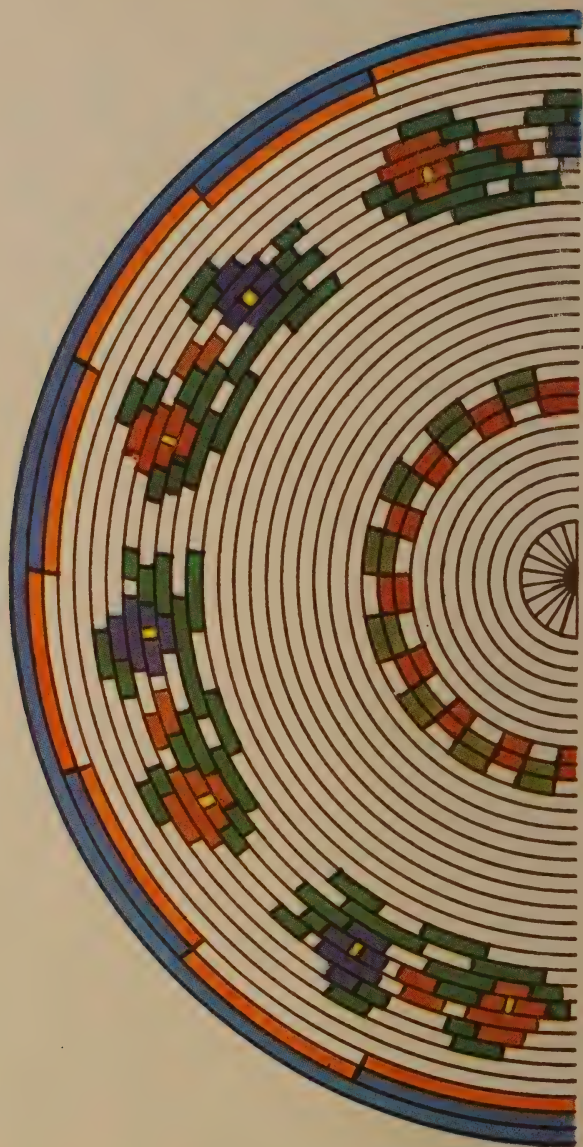
The entire basket may be made of lazy squaw stitch, but it requires much time and patience, and unless very well made, wearies with its monotony. A more interesting development, which requires less time and patience, and which with practise may be made firm, is made by winding the raffia very smoothly over the reed for the space of half an inch or so, finishing it with a lazy squaw stitch, which must be made quite firm. These two stitches alternate thruout the row, keeping the

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

winding smooth and the reed well covered. The following row is made in like manner, except that a lazy squaw stitch is placed on either side of the single stitch in the row below, making the space between smaller. The third row of this pattern is like the first, placing one stitch between the two in the second row, which completes the small diamond design. Following out this idea of grouping lazy squaw stitches with winding space between results in very interesting geometrical designs all in one color. A basket of this type requires less decoration.

CROSS STITCH PATTERNS

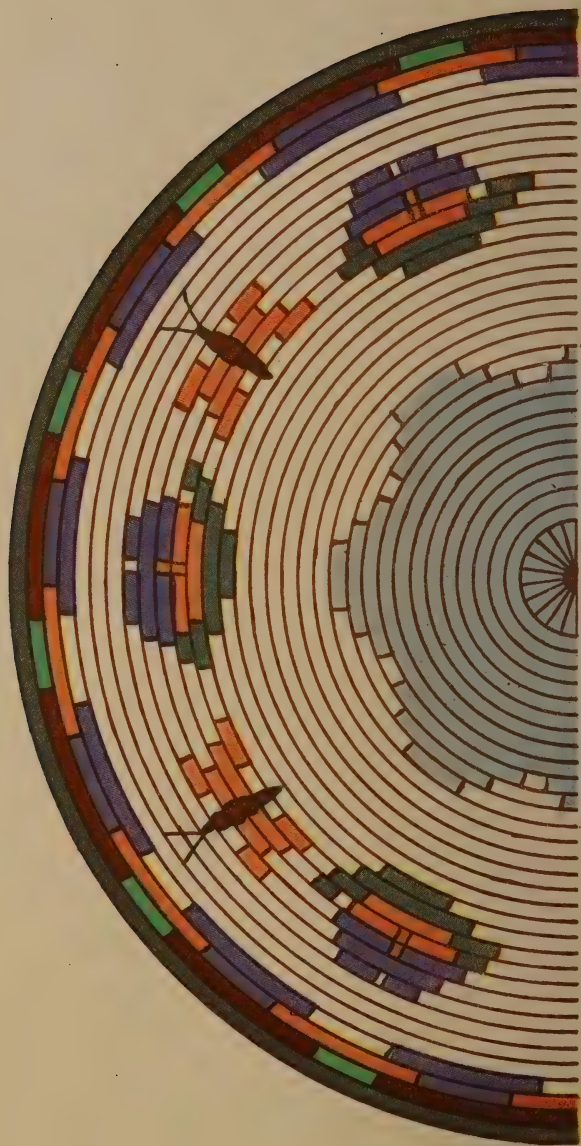
By drawing vertical lines thru these designs, they are equally well adapted to cross stitch embroidery, the spaces between the lines representing the size of



FLOWER SPRAY IN ORANGE AND BLUE

RAFFIA BASKET DESIGNS

the stitch. The reverse does not so well apply, as cross stitch designs are not shaped to fit the form of the basket. Raffia basket craft offers a wide field to one who has a love for design and color. The materials required are few and inexpensive, and no especial tools are necessary. Unlike weaving, which demands an expensive loom and a large space to place it, one may work anywhere, carrying the materials in a small bag. Each basket is a fresh experiment, and in its creation one learns to observe much both in nature and in art which might otherwise pass unnoticed. The color sense is quickened, and this feeling for color opens a new world of beauty in which there is as keen a delight as for the lover of music who hears fine music.



BUTTERFLIES AND PANSIES

OTHER BOOKS

BY

GERTRUDE AND MILDRED ASHLEY

Raffia Basketry as a Fine Art . . .	1915
Raffia Basketry as an Art (enlarged) .	1922

BY

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Portfolio of Designs (in black and white)	1919
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Handwritten scribbles in blue ink, possibly "1258".



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